1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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chief occasion of strife among Nuer themselves. Indeed, after a successful raid on Dinka stock there is often further fighting over the booty. Moreover, Nuer tribes raid one another for cattle. Thus the Leek raid the Jikany, Rengyan, and other western tribes, and cattle raids are of common occurrence along tribal boundaries elsewhere, for to 'steal' (*kwal*) cattle from another tribe is regarded as laudable. Within a tribe, also, fighting frequently results from disputes about cattle between its sections and between individuals of the same section, even of the same village or homestead. Nuer fight on slight provocation and most willingly and frequently when a cow is at stake. On such an issue close kinsmen fight and homes are broken up. When ownership of cattle is in dispute Nuer throw over caution and propriety, showing themselves careless of odds, contemptuous of danger, and full of guile. As my Nuer servant once said to me: 'You can trust a Nuer with any amount of money, pounds and pounds and pounds, and go away for years and return and he will not have stolen it; but a single cow—that is a different matter.'

Nuer say that it is cattle that destroy people, for 'more people have died for the sake of a cow than for any other cause'. They have a story which tells how, when the beasts broke up their community and each went its own way and lived its own life, Man slew the mother of Cow and Buffalo. Buffalo said she would avenge her mother by attacking men in the bush, but Cow said that she would remain in the habitations of men and avenge her mother by causing endless disputes about debts, bride-wealth, and adultery, which would lead to fighting and deaths among the people. So this feud between Cow and Man has gone on from time immemorial, and day by day Cow avenges the death of her mother by occasioning the death of men. Hence Nuer say of their cattle, 'They will be finished together with mankind', for men will all die on account of cattle and they and cattle will cease together.

It must not, however, be supposed that Nuer live in continuous turmoil: the very fact that they are prepared to resist any infringement of their rights in cattle induces prudence in the relations between persons who regard themselves as members of the same group. It may be said, furthermore, that the great

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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183 231 626 vulnerability of cattle coupled with the extensive living-space required for them are compatible only with a far recognition of conventions in the settlement of disputes, or, in other words, the existence of a tribal organization embracing a large territory, and of some feeling of community over yet larger areas.

Fighting about ownership of cattle and seizing cattle for what are claimed as debts and compensation for losses are of a somewhat different order to raiding for cattle over which no rights, other than the power of the strong, are asserted. War 721 against foreign peoples, as distinct from warfare within a tribe, is almost entirely for plunder. Nuer war against the Dinka, therefore, differs from most prim.tive warfare in that its primary object is acquisition of wealth, for cattle are a form of wealth that not only lasts a long time and reproduces itself, but is, also, easily seized and transported. Furthermore, it enables invaders to live on the country without commissariat. Crops and dwellings can be destroyed, but cattle can be confiscated and taken home. This quality, which has given pastoral peoples a bias in favour of the arts of war rather than the arts of peace, has meant that the Nuer are not entirely dependent on their own cattle, but can augment their herds and restore the ravages of rinderpest, and have, in fact, for a long time increased their stock, and hence supplemented their food-supply, by raiding; a condition that has shaped their character, economy, and political structure. Skill and courage in fighting are reckoned the highest virtues, raiding the most noble, as well as the most profitable, occupation, and some measure of political agreement and unity a necessity.

We hasten to add that an explanation of warfare between Nuer and Dinka by reference to cattle and pastures alone is too simple a reduction. Hostility is expressed in terms of cattle, and desire for cattle accounts for some peculiarities of the struggle and some characteristics of the political organizations involved in it, but the struggle itself can only be fully understood as a structural process and we present it as such later.

000 We now pass to a brief examination of the oecological system of which Nuer and their cattle form part to discover the conditions in which cattle-husbandry is practised and how far its practice in a certain environment influences political structure.

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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561 another hospitality and to share their possessions. Fighting is
571 considered an appropriate mode of behaviour between age-mates, but a man ought not to fight a man of a senior set. The comradeship between age-mates springs from a recognition of a mystical union between them, linking their fortunes, which derives from an almost physical bond, analogous to that of true kinship, for they have shed their blood together. (4) Members
561 of a set are expected to show respect to members of senior sets,
576 and their deference to them can be seen in discussions, in
626 etiquette, in division of food, and so forth. Whenever there is a question about the propriety of speech or action it is judged by reference to the relative positions of the persons concerned in the age-set structure, if kinship status is not also involved. Since every man has a known age-relationship to every other man in Nuerland with whom he is likely to come into contact, their social attitude to him, and his social attitude to them, is determined in advance by the distances between them in age-set structure, unless kinship takes precedence. Although it is possible for a man to avenge a breach of these patterns of behaviour by a curse, if it is a very serious breach, the ordinary sanctions of conduct are a man's conscience and desire for approval.

561 It will have been noted that the relations between the sets
608 are defined in the idiom of family relationships. The members of a man's father's age-set are his 'fathers' and the members of his father's brothers' 'age-sets' are, in a less precise sense, also his 'fathers'. The sons of a man's set are his 'sons', and they may fall into several sets. The wives of members of a man's father's set are his 'mothers', and the wives of members of his sons' sets are his 'daughters'. All members of a man's own set are likewise 'brothers', though here the analogy is seldom expressed because the comradeship between age-mates is strongly affirmed in the idiom of the system, for they are all *ric*, age-mates, to one another. As, in any case, a man commonly addresses all persons much senior to himself as 'father' and 'mother', all persons much junior to himself as 'son' and 'daughter', and all persons of about the same age as himself as 'brother' and 'sister', the terminology of address between different sets is not a differentiating one and it cannot be said how

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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Given that there were rules of conduct expressed in the terms *cuong*, 'right', and *duer*, 'wrong', which controlled the relations of one Nuer with another and of one group with another group, what were the sanctions which made for the observance of those rules? The primary sanction, and one which is most affected by the establishment of public security and ordered administration today, is the sanction of self-help; retaliation if a wrong is committed, or the use of force to claim a right. This applies to individuals, who fear that those they have wronged or those to whom definite obligations have not been fulfilled will take physical action against them, and fear also that, because their action is agreed to be wrong, they will receive no support from their fellows in resisting. Moreover the wronged may receive the assistance of their own kinsmen and neighbours, who will overwhelm any attempt at resistance. This applies to groups of individuals in relation to other groups in the same way, and is expressed in the balanced opposition of tribal segments and kinship groups. A Nuer may owe one of his kinsmen a cow and refuse to pay it. His kinsman will take the cow by stealth or wrest it from him by force, and the success of this action will depend on the extent of the non-intervention of other relatives. In the relationship of individuals there is also the prevailing principle of collective responsibility, so that in fact there is rarely an isolated individual wrong or an isolated right. The strength of the right, or the extent of the wrong, is qualified by the relationship of the parties concerned. Further sanctions are social reprobation, unpopularity, loss of approval and respect of neighbours, and hence loss of the privileges which the individual possesses as a member of a community and which the community possesses as part of a larger social group. Such privileges are both social and political. They are also economic, because so many economic activities must be carried out collectively. For some wrongs there is also a religious sanction, but, as I shall attempt to show later, the religious sanction is often an expression of kinship ideals.

627 [672] 626

The force of all these sanctions is relative to the position in the social structure of the persons concerned. Clearly social obligations are likely to be more binding on persons not only related by blood but also closely associated in the activities of day to day life. Loss of privilege is a greater loss in such circumstances. Generally speaking, the closer the relationship, expressed in terms of kinship, in association by common residence, and economic co-operation, the greater the need to abide by accepted modes of behaviour. Not only is the need greater and therefore the likelihood of obedience greater too, but also the difficulty of composition, when there is a quarrel, is less, because the sanctions which ensure good relations with other persons within the group in other respects are more intense and therefore more effective. The reaction of indignation is not likely to run to such a pitch of ill-feeling.

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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The significance of the 'structural relativity' of Nuer society is therefore most important in a study of customary law, for although the rules and principles which govern the conduct of all Nuer are essentially the same, the extent of their application is relative and largely dependent on the social context. This is best illustrated by use of an example. It is a legal wrong to commit adultery with another man's wife. It is a wrong which, if social relations are to continue between the two parties and the possibility of retaliation on the part of the wronged husband is to be removed, will require the payment of cattle as an indemnity. In the first place, the likelihood of the wrongdoer paying the cattle at all is determined by the relationship of the parties, both in terms of actual kinship and in terms of territorial proximity, in residence and all the sanctions which go with common residence. It will not be paid if there is no pressure on the part of the community in which they live, and there will be pressure in proportion to the extent to which the men's mutual animosity disturbs the tranquillity of that community; generally speaking, the greater the structural distance between them, the less the likelihood of composition. But in another aspect of the law concerning adultery the reverse is found. If we analyse the concepts behind the payment of the indemnity, we find that, of the six cattle required, one has purely ritual significance. It is a cow called *yang kule* ('the cow of the sleeping mat'), the payment of which is demanded as expiation for the spiritual pollution which is caused by adultery, rather than as an indemnity required to appease the indignation of the husband. In disputes over acts of adultery which arise between men who are close kinsmen it is rare that anything more than this one cow will be demanded, for not only is the moral indignation much less, but the group of which they are part is sufficiently well-knit to resist the disturbance caused within it. Not only is the wrong a lesser one because the wronged person has other associations with the wrongdoer which mitigate the offence,[1] but social equilibrium has not been disturbed to a degree which other sanctions making for good relations cannot rectify. Thus we see that the closer the structural relationship of the parties involved, the more likely is the wrong to be rectified, but the smaller is the indemnification required to do so. Conversely, the more remote the relationship the greater the indemnification necessary but the smaller the likelihood that the wrong will be rectified at all. This is a principle which applies to all wrongs which require

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[1] There is another method of analysis which expresses the same idea. It is that in the payment of *indemnification* in cattle between two persons closely related the limitation of rights in cattle must be considered. An individual has rights in cattle limited by mutual obligations which apply to him as member of a kinship group. If the wrongdoer is a kinsman of the wronged he has limited rights in the cattle of the wronged, and the closer the relationship, the greater the rights. Hence the recipient of the cattle is also a person upon whom may lie the obligation to assist in the payment. This principle is more clearly illustrated in payment of compensation for homicide, and will be discussed more fully later.

8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
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indemnification,[1] but is nowadays modified by the fact of enforcement of the law through the agency of Nuer courts.

Restitutive Sanctions

Rules of conduct towards kinsmen and neighbours are upheld by these sanctions. If good relations are to continue, certain breaches of conduct usually require the payment of compensation. Adultery, as we have seen, requires six head of cattle for this purpose; bodily injuries require compensation in proportion to the seriousness of the injury and there are complicated scales laid down in tradition. Homicide requires the transference of forty head of cattle from the kinsmen of the killer to those of the deceased in order to restore the balance between them. Scales of compensation for wrongs can be quoted by the older generation of Nuer with surprising consistency, but this is an indication neither of rigidity of custom nor of constant application. Whether compensation was paid at all and, if paid, whether the scales were strictly followed, depended largely on the relationship of the persons involved. If a dispute arose between groups of people after a wrong had been inflicted on one of them, we have seen that their relationship in the social structure determined the likelihood of settlement. The sanctions for composition operated along lines of social cleavage, being less intense and therefore less effective the greater the structural distance. A man of one tribe could rarely hope to exact compensation for an injury inflicted by someone of another tribe unless there were other links between them which extended beyond the political limits of the tribe. Similarly an individual living within one primary segment would find it difficult to get compensation from an individual living in another primary segment unless there were other ties between them, usually kinship or marital ties, which made composition mutually advantageous. It also depended on the state of the relations obtaining between the two segments, for there was often a feud (*tar*) between them. These observations are less true of members of secondary segments, since the smaller the social sphere the greater the possibility that compensation would be paid, and would be also a matter of extreme expediency. The application of Nuer law was therefore relative to the social structure, and the extent to which it was followed depended on current relations of the social units concerned. It was unlikely that minor disputes involving the payment of compensation to wronged individuals would ever be settled so long as the communities with whom each was associated remained in a state of feud. The situation would be substantially altered if the feud itself was composed by payment of compensation (*dhang*) between them. Composition of a feud was

[1] Homicide and bodily injury, defamation of character, infringement of rights in property, violation of rights in women, &c.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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Chapter Three

FAMILY LIFE IN NUERLAND

THE HOUSE AND ITS FURNISHINGS

THE Nuer does not live to himself. He is a part of his particular village, and his actions affect all his relatives, no matter how distant the relationship may be. This fact checks him to some extent in his misdeeds, for any infringement of Nuer law not only affects him but all his people as well. He must give heed to them and to Nuer law in general if he is to count on their support and aid in time of need (Fig. 7).

The men and boys of the village usually sleep in the barn which is to be found in most villages. A house is set aside for the sleeping quarters of the girls. The women and little children sleep in the houses.

The Nuer house is conical in shape. It has mud walls up to about three feet or more from the ground, then the sloping grass roof. There are no windows. A door, woven like a mat, is made of grass. If the weather is cool, a fire is made inside the house and the smoke goes out through the roof. At night the door is tightly closed in order to keep wild animals out, so the ventilation is indeed poor.

A fence of cane-stalks is made and encloses a small yard. The door of this fence as well as the door of the house are made low so that one must stoop in order to get in.

The yard is swept clean—a bunch of grass tightly tied together at one end suffices for a broom. One part of the enclosure is plastered with mud for a radius of two or three feet, and in the centre is a hole, also plastered, in which the women may be found pounding the dura, making use of a long pole. The dura is pounded very fine, the coarser parts being sifted out by shaking it on a grass

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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refused to let him have a hoe he had to bury her in his head. As a result of this incident giraffe and shrewmouse uttered conditional curses, giraffe saying that if ever a shrewmouse crossed a path he would die, and shrewmouse saying that if ever a giraffe ate grass he would die. This is why one never sees a shrewmouse on a path unless it be dead, and why one never sees a giraffe eating grass, only the leaves of trees. The mother of goat, in another story, borrowed a knife from the mother of hyena and lost it. The mother of hyena cursed her, saying that in future her descendants would eat goats wherever they found them. This is the reason why goats are always pawing the ground. They are still looking for the lost knife of the mother of hyena. Another story relates how man lent his running-powers to ostrich and ostrich refused to return them. It is because man then cursed the race of ostriches that today men sometimes hunt them for their feathers and lions kill them for meat. Shoebills eat fish and blue herons eat frogs and other small creatures of marsh and shallows. The reason for this is that *bany*, the shoebill, and *ngok*, the blue heron, were sons of one father and because *ngok* neglected an uncle's duties to *bany*'s children when their father died, *bany*'s mother cursed him and his descendants. Yet another of many such stories relates how the village mouse, after having taught men how to beget children, taught women how to bear them. In return for this service woman uttered a *biit*, saying that village mice would share the food of the home with its mistress. This last story introduces us to a further sense of the word *biit*, an invocation which is a blessing and not a curse; for a man can *biit* a person to good fortune, as woman did in the case of mouse, instead of to bad fortune. In my experience this sense is rare.

The curse is undoubtedly a powerful sanction of conduct, largely because it is not thought necessary that a wronged man should utter it aloud for misfortune to follow. He has only to think it. Such an unspoken curse Nuer call a *biit loac*, a curse of the heart. Indeed, it would seem that he need not expressly formulate a curse in his mind at all, a mere feeling of resentment arising from a genuine grievance being sufficient to cause injury to the person who occasioned it. Thus I was told that if a man is killed by his wife's brother and the wife laments his death, her sorrow and sighs are themselves a kind of *biit*. God hears them and will cause

[1] Cf. the old belief in England that a shrew cannot cross a footpath and live.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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the slayer to become a wanderer on the face of the earth and to die in the midst of his wanderings. He becomes one of the *jibiet*, the cursed ones, and what Nuer also call a *gwan giakni*, a man possessed by evil. An action by itself may bear evil fruit without anyone saying or doing anything to make it bear. Nuer say that 'it is like a *biit*'. A man who kills another finds all the strength gone out of him. The infringement of a religious interdiction carries its own penalty, for the interdiction is 'like a *biit*'. For example, misfortune will fall, if only in that the cuts of manhood on his brow will not cicatrize, on a lad who during the period of seclusion after initiation has contact with the cattle.

Though the word *biit* may not often be used with the sense of blessing it is sometimes so used, and as the idea of blessing has some importance in Nuer thought a few words may be devoted to it before making some concluding remarks about curses.[1] An older person blesses a younger one by spitting on his head. The spittle (*ruei*) has, as in other parts of Africa, a special virtue and is said to benefit the *yiegh*, the life, of the person who receives it. I was told that this is particularly done by a man's parents when he returns from a long journey, and one man said that it is then done so that the ghosts, who may have forgotten their kinsman, may know him again. A mother also blesses a son about to set out on a long journey by taking his middle finger in her hand, spitting on him, and saying something like 'friend, my son, you will journey on this earth, you will go round [avoid] all thorns [troubles]'. She may also take some soot from the bottom of a pot and mix it with butter and daub this paste on the soles of his feet, under the knees, and on thighs, chest, and head. Spitting figures as a blessing in various other contexts. If a woman does not conceive, her father's kin spit into a gourd and rub her belly with the spittle, asking God that she may conceive. If she does so, the child may be named *Ruei*, Spittle, or *Nyaruea*, Daughter of Spittle. The spittle of a prophet is considered to be especially efficacious in curing barrenness. When a leopard-skin priest arbitrates between two parties and gives a decision in favour of one of them, that man may hand his spear to the priest,

[1] Another word which sometimes has the sense of blessing is *puok*, but, though it sometimes has this sense, it is most commonly used in reference to the making of a gift to in-laws and is then, as in most other contexts, best translated 'to honour'.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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789 827 who returns it to him after having first spat on it. When a father has agreed to his son's initiation the boy goes to a member of his father's age-set and this man plucks out a tuft of the boy's hair, spits on it, and brushes it against the boy's face and head. This is the blessing of the father's age-set. A leech massages a sick person with his spittle. Mr. B. A. Lewis records that when the Gaawar tribe chose a certain Bwoogh Kerpel to lead them across the Nile to conquer fresh lands from the Dinka the people lifted him on high so that God might see that he had been chosen, and they gave him a gourdful of milk to drink into which they had all spat.[1] In all these examples—and others could be given—there is the idea of blessing. However, a blessing can be given without spitting. Any person can bless another (pp. 16–17), but the blessings of those whose curses are most effective are also the most effective.

789 776 It is important to note that, as with curses, blessings are thought to be effective only because God makes them so. Just as a curse is an imprecatory prayer (for if God is not formally addressed in it it is understood that it is his affair), so a prayer is implied in a blessing. It is a benedictory prayer. Hence (and here again as with curses), a man can be aided merely by a person thinking well of him, bearing him in sweet recollection (*tim*) without formally blessing him. He blesses him in his heart, and just as God sees a man's just resentment for a wrong and the resentment then has the force of a curse, so he sees the love and the love has then the force of a blessing. So when a Nuer says '*ba ji tiem*', 'I will think of you', he means that he will think fondly of you and so blesses you. A good action in itself may bring fortune to a man. God sees it and it becomes, Nuer say, like a *biit* for good, just as he sees a bad action and it becomes a *biit* for ill.

789 776 626 The religious significance of cursing and blessing lies in a dominant motif of Nuer religion, that of *cuong* in opposition to *duer*, right in opposition to wrong. A person's curse of another is only effective if he is in the right and the other is in the wrong. There must have been damage or negligence, and in Nuer reckoning this implies a social relationship of some kind between the two persons, such as, in fact, is bound to exist between any persons so involved in Nuer society. It is when the obligations of a relationship have not been observed that a curse can act, its effectiveness increasing with the closeness or social significance of the relation-

[1] B. A. Lewis, 'Nuer Spokesmen', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1951, p. 81.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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789 ship; and it can be quieted by reparation to the wronged person.
776 In an account of Nuer religion what is here important is that the
626 curse is only effective, Nuer say, because God sees that one man has right and the other wrong and allows it to act. It seems to the observer therefore that the curse, like the blessing, has its own psychic power, but that Nuer relate it to a set of moral rules of which God is conceived of as guardian and judge. The power of a curse or a blessing thus lies ultimately not with man, who is only the medium, but with God. God's role is not merely permissive, for, as we have noted, a wrong itself may, through the sufferings and lamentations of the wronged persons, bring retribution to the wrongdoers without their taking any action in the matter themselves. This is why also Nuer say of the infringement of a religious interdiction, in which no immediate question of wrong to another may arise, that it has a certain similarity to a *biit*. Formally the two ideas are quite distinct, and Nuer see a similarity between them only because in both cases there is a fault which is punished by God, in the first case indirectly and in the second directly. Consequently we are once again faced with the Nuer idea of faults, which necessitates a fuller discussion than I have so far given to it but which is also more appropriately treated separately in the next chapter.

775 The concept of *cien*, to which I now turn, has certain similarities
626 to that of *biit*, especially to the silent curse, 'the curse of the heart'. Nuer think that it bodes ill for those who have wronged a man if he dies with resentment in his heart, for he will then take ghostly vengeance on them from the grave.

The word *cien* is found in one form or another, and with common elements of meaning, in all the Nilotic languages. In Nuer it means the vengeance, generally producing sickness or other misfortune ending in death, taken by an aggrieved ghost on the living, and in its verbal form the taking of such vengeance. Nuer regard it as a most serious matter if a man dies with a legitimate grievance in his heart, for while it may be possible to make amends to a living man for a wrong done to him and thereby rid oneself of his *biit*, it is often impossible to make peace with the dead. Fear of *cien* undoubtedly, if we are to believe what Nuer say, makes them avoid, at any rate sometimes, persistently denying men justice lest they take their wrongs to the grave and from there seek settlement.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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775 •626 761 I give some examples of the kind of circumstances in which *cien* acts. A man haunts his kinsmen because he was slain and they neither avenged him nor exacted compensation in cattle for his death. When a man slays a close kinsman 'they [may] say "do not spear him, let him die of *cien*"'. After a while he becomes distracted and his ears ring. He loses his wits and takes to wandering alone in the bush and to sleeping there by himself at night, or he wanders to a distant country and lives there haunted. 'Nuer have no sense. A man may slay even his mother's son in anger. Well, he haunts him from the grave. He [the living man] sits moping. For two or three days together he refuses food. He wanders by himself in the bush. Then he sickens and dies.' A man may kill another secretly when they are alone together in the bush and tell no one of the deed. Then the dead man's ghost will pursue him from the grave. I was told of a case of this kind among the eastern Jikany in which the slayer married some two or three years after his crime. His first child died, then his second child, then his third child; and 'he remained childless like an impotent man'. He consulted a diviner, who wormed out of him that 'he had something in the earth', a euphemism for the body of his victim. On the diviner's advice he confessed and paid compensation for the life he had taken. Nuer told me also that a man who has witnessed a killing, though he had no part in it, yet if he keep silence, will suffer misfortune because 'it is like as though he had hidden the [dead] man'. A man who commits serious incest, such as one who has carnal relations with a woman and then with her daughter, and so causes the death of the daughter, will be haunted by her ghost. The ghost will summon him to the land of the dead, saying '*ban wa jogh*', 'let us go behind' [to the *jookni*, ghosts]. A [762] girl who is married to a man she detests and commits suicide may take vengeance from the grave on her kin who forced her to marry him. However, those Nuer whom I questioned were not in agreement in this case, some holding that the girl would not have *cuong*, right, and could not therefore harm her kin. A man who knows that his son had congress with his wife may keep silence, hoping that the son will confess and ask his forgiveness, but the son also keeps silence, even when he sees that his father is dying, so the father takes his resentment with him to the grave and punishes him from there. A man who has not been properly buried may haunt his kin. However, a man who has suffered any

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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injustice may take ghostly vengeance. Nuer say also that a ghost watches over his kin and punishes those who commit some grave fault, especially that of depriving his young sons of the cattle of his herd or of their sisters' marriages. When a father or other close kinsman summons a man from the grave to join him in death Nuer use the word *tul*, which has the sense of 'to punish', to describe his action as well as the word *cien*; and they may also use the verb *be*, with the sense of sending for, or coming to fetch, or returning to get something.

An appreciation of two considerations arising from what Nuer say about ghostly vengeance gives us a further understanding of their ideas about the dead. The dead are thought to have the same feelings as when they were alive. They are resentful of injustice and bear malice to those who have wronged them. It stands to reason therefore—and this is the second consideration—that it is only those who have recently departed who avenge themselves on the living, for it is only they who can have been wronged by them. Nuer do not think of *cien* in connexion with ancestral ghosts but only in connexion with those who have recently become ghosts. It would appear that a man can still take vengeance even after he has been dispatched to the community of the ghosts by the mortuary rites, but a dead man seems to be most dangerous and his living kinsmen the most vulnerable the less the lapse of time after his death, and consequently in the period between death and the mortuary ceremonies. Those nearest to the dead are those who are most likely to be affected, for though a man can *cien*, just as he can *biit*, anyone who has done him an injury, what has been said of the *biit* can be said of the *cien*: the closer the relationship of the persons concerned the worse both the offence and its consequences. Curses and ghostly vengeance are thus two sides to the same idea and in general they have the same social incidence.

To stop the effects of *cien* it is necessary to make sacrifice to God and, where possible, reparation to the ghost for the wrong done to him. Sacrifice without reparation is of no avail. Nuer say that it may temporarily wipe out (*wec*) the *cien* from the body of the haunted man, but it will return if he does not make amends. Therefore, when he makes sacrifice he tells God 'I am sorry, I have erred; take thy cow and let the *cien* leave me.' Nuer say that God is to understand that such an expression of contrition implies the intention to make reparation, if this is possible.

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775 As Nuer speak about *cien* it has, therefore, the sense of an
626 injustice crying out for vengeance. The essence of the concept is the notion of a wrong unrighted, of a grievance which demands, and rightly demands, redress. Even a living man who has no other way of getting justice may say to the man who has wronged him *'ba ji cien'*, 'I will haunt you', meaning that though he cannot get justice now he will get it after he is dead. Nuer say that he may express this threat not in words but by looks. As in the case of the *biit*, so with the *cien*, it is God who makes the ghostly vengeance to work. Nuer say that the wronged ghost exacts vengeance by making his cause known to God, who sooner or later punishes the wrongdoer.

753 The moral action of *biit* and *cien*, which have a similarity to certain ideas of sin discussed in the next chapter, is in this respect very different for Nuer from the exercise of psychical and physical powers which have no moral foundation and are therefore not thought to involve divine judgement and intervention and are only thought of in connexion with Spirit, if at all, so far as all that happens in the world can ultimately be said to happen because God allows it and can be appealed to to change the course of
[843] events. I refer to the evil eye (*peth*); ghouls (*roth*); the danger of pregnant women (*ther*) and to a lesser extent of their husbands,
[177] an idea some of the eastern Nuer have taken over from the Anuak;
[841] the danger of women who commence menstruation in the dry season month of *pet* (*koc mai*); the danger of a child after two or three of its elder brothers and sisters have died at, or shortly after,
[842] birth (*jul*); monorchids (*tor*), a child conceived while its mother is still suckling (*mok*); and menstruation, which is dangerous for the cattle—no woman may drink their milk at this time. If Nuer are in danger from any of these influences they may pray and sacrifice to God, but if they do so their prayers and sacrifices are mixed up with all sorts of other and different sets of ideas and they deal with the situation mainly by magical rites which would be both inappropriate and ineffective where Spirit is concerned. They therefore cannot properly be included under the rubric of religion and so lie outside the scope of this book. They are mentioned only in order that their relative unimportance may be emphasized. That in itself is of significance. Perspective would be lost were it not understood.